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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 002715

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/I, NEA/I/PM
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DEPT ALSO FOR EAP/CM

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TAGS: [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [EPET](#) [KHDP](#) [AF](#) [CH](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: CHINA TRAINS IRAQI ARMY PERSONNEL IN DEMINING

REF: BAGHDAD 1920 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol-Mil Minister-Counselor Cameron Munter for reasons 1.
4 b,d

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Chinese Defense Attach to Iraq confirmed September 21 that the Chinese military is providing training in demining to approximately 20 Iraqi Army officers and 20 Afghan Army officers in the vicinity of Nanjing. People's Republic of China (PRC) Defense Attach Senior COL Wang Ruizheng welcomed two U.S. miloffs and Pol-Mil officer to lunch at the Al-Mansour Hotel in Baghdad, where the Chinese Embassy is temporarily located, for a wide-ranging discussion. According to COL Wang, the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized the training, and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is providing the course, which is intended to last six to eight weeks. COL Wang contradicted aspects of the September 15-16 media reports, however, in claiming that the project was not intended to improve Chinese oil production in projects such as Ahdab (in Wasit Province) or to curry favor with Wasit locals because, he said, the Iraqis would decide where and how to deploy the newly trained officers.

12. (C) COL Wang characterized the initiative as a limited, military-focused (rather than humanitarian) demining assistance project that presents a rare opportunity for China to engage with Iraqis militarily. The course, he said, began in mid-September, is conducted in English, and combines classroom theory and practical fieldwork. Upon completion of the course, the units of the Iraqi officers would receive an undisclosed amount of demining equipment from China. COL Wang said that at this point there were no specific plans to provide additional demining classes, although the Chinese government would be open to providing continued assistance if the Iraqis were.

13. (C) COMMENT: The project, as initially reported in the media, interested Post because it potentially implied: a) increased Chinese engagement with Iraq; b) particularly, military-to-military interaction; c) an impact on Iraqi oil production and Chinese National Petroleum Corporation operations here; and d) overlap with USG efforts to increase demining operations (reftel). On all scores, the relevance of the Chinese demining assistance appears still minor. That said, it would strain credulity to accept the notion that the PRC is offering the training without ulterior motives or additional interests. Given the possibility that China intends to gain more influence with the Iraqi military where it has oil interests and where the U.S. military is heavily engaged, we will continue to monitor developments. END

COMMENT.

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